

Address by
***The Honorable
R. James Woolsey***

before the World Affairs Council of
Washington, D.C.
1992 Annual Dinner



December 2, 1992

Courtesy of Northrop Corporation as Principal Corporate Benefactor

The Honorable R. James Woolsey

The Honorable R. James Woolsey has long been involved in national security affairs. Most recently, he was Ambassador and U.S. Representative to the Negotiation on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). Prior to that, Ambassador Woolsey's public positions included Delegate at Large to the U.S.-Soviet Strategic Reduction Talks (START) and Nuclear and Space Talks (NST) (1983-86), Under Secretary of the Navy (1977-79), General Counsel to the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services (1972-73), Advisor to the U.S. Delegation to the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT 1) and a Program Analyst in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (1968-70).

Ambassador Woolsey has served on numerous commissions charged with reviewing matters of significant public import. In 1992, he chaired the Global Policy Project of The United Nations Association of the United States of America, as well as a special technical committee assessing collection systems for the Director of Central Intelligence. Previously, he has been a member of the President's Commission on Federal Ethics Law Reform (1989); the President's Commission on Defense Management (1985-86); and the President's Commission on Strategic Forces (1983). He currently is Vice-Chairman of the Defense

Trade Advisory Group for the Department of State.

Ambassador Woolsey has written frequently on defense and foreign affairs. He is the editor of *Nuclear Arms: Ethics, Strategy, Politics* (1984). Ambassador Woolsey is also a Regent of the Smithsonian Institution (1989-present) and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Board of Regents; he is a trustee for the Center for Strategic & International Studies (1991-present); and he has been a trustee of The Goldwater Scholarship & Excellence in Education Foundation (1988-90); The Aerospace Corporation (1982-89); and Stanford University (1972-74). He is currently a partner in the law firm of Shea & Gardner and is a director of Martin Marietta Corporation and British Aerospace, Inc.

Ambassador Woolsey is a graduate of Stanford University (B.A. 1963, Phi Beta Kappa); Oxford University (St. John's College; M.S. 1965, Rhodes Scholarship); and Yale University (LL.B. 1968, Managing Editor, Yale Law Journal). Ambassador Woolsey is married to Suzanne Haley Woolsey, Executive Director, Commission on Behavioral & Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council, National Academy of Sciences. They have three children, Robert, Daniel, and Benjamin.

**In mid-December, Ambassador Woolsey was nominated by President-elect Clinton to be the Director of Central Intelligence.*

I was talking the other evening with my wife, Sue, about the possibility of my making some remarks here this evening. I said that, this being an extraordinarily sophisticated, able and challenging audience, I should perhaps talk about some big issues, such as how we won the cold war, what the future might have in store, and particularly how well we've been able to predict what was going to happen.

She then, unfortunately, pulled out the letter. I arrived in Vienna November 7, 1989, to negotiate the CFE treaty, four days before the Berlin Wall went down. The morning of November 11th I wrote her a letter which, sadly, she still has. It goes something like this: Well, there was something interesting on CNN last night about the Berlin Wall. Moving along to Christmas vacation, really looking forward to you and the boys coming over. Thought we might go skiing. And I'd like for us all to go to Prague because, although you've been there, none of the rest of us has, and I want the boys to see what a real Stalinist state looks like.

So, I more or less abandoned the idea of sharing with you tonight

my own personal expertise at predicting how the future was going to go. But I didn't give up on the notion of talking to you seriously about that overall question—how we might all, together, get a better handle on these trends. Indeed, this is particularly important because I was not alone in 1989. Most of the people who were looking at the Soviets did not really see very well what was coming, even in 1989, and certainly not before.

Seymour Martin Lipset has recently written a fascinating article on how dimly most of us saw what was coming. Lipset says that, basically, most liberals, particularly among the Soviet specialists, thought that the Soviet Union was very strong and powerful and that, generally, things were also very stable. They were guided in part by policy considerations, by not wanting to disturb the relationship so much as to create dangerous conflict.

Most conservatives, on the other hand, thought the Soviet empire was quite evil but they also held the view that it was very strong and powerful and most also thought it quite stable; they were also in part guided by policy — by

wanting to generate the political will for the West to stand firm.

A very few people, including the gentleman at our front table here — my former boss, Paul Nitze — had a far more nuanced and sophisticated view of what was going on over there. But most professional observers, particularly the specialists, did not see what was coming very clearly at all.

Lipset points out that two prominent American politicians, however, had been saying for 12 to 15 years that although the Soviet Union was quite evil, it really had feet of clay and was likely to collapse. It's an interesting pair, according to Marty Lipset— Ronald Reagan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Now, the only thing I see that is clearly common to those two distinguished political figures is that both are Irish Americans. Perhaps it's true that the Irish hear music that the rest of us simply can't hear — certainly it was music that I could not hear the morning of November 11th in Vienna in 1989.

But short of trying to obtain Irish gene transplants for all of us, how

do we get some sort of feeling, some sort of understanding, for how we won the cold war and how we might be able to deal with what is now coming at us? How can we climb a tree, so to speak, and get some view of the horizon to keep from getting lost, as almost everyone did who in the past focused just on policies and politics and interest groups? How can we get a better perspective than staying fixated on the stream bed through which we're somewhat blindly stumbling?

Thinking about this, and about Lipset's article, I went back to a favorite quote, which, although it is a paragraph long, I want to read to you because I think it is the essence of wisdom on these issues. It's the closing words of John Maynard Keynes' general theory:

"... the ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed, the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.

Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas. Not, indeed, immediately, but after a certain interval, for in the field of economic and political philosophy there are not many who are influenced by new theories after they're twenty-five or thirty years of age, so that the ideas which civil servants and politicians and even agitators apply to current events are not likely to be the newest. But, soon or late, it is ideas, not vested interests, which are dangerous for good or evil."

I want to ask you this evening to take that advice of Keynes' with me, and for a few minutes to look at the history of ideas as a focus for understanding how we won the cold war and what we need to do now to deal with the new risks that are in front of us.

First, what is it that we just did over the course of the last 45 years?

A fascinating thinker, Bruce Ackerman, Sterling professor of law and political philosophy at Yale, has written a new book on constitutional revolution. Ackerman says there that, essentially, the end of the cold war marked the end of a civil war between two children of the Enlightenment.

And some few years ago, Arnold Toynbee described Marxism as a Christian heresy.

Now, I don't believe that either Ackerman or Toynbee were trying to be particularly kind to Marxism and certainly not to Communism. I think they were trying to point toward an analysis that to the best of my knowledge has been set out most carefully by Sir Isaiah Berlin over the years in a number of essays. Let me see if I can state it succinctly.

From essentially the time of Moses through the early 19th century — the first semester and a half of the course we all used to take in college (and maybe somewhere they still teach) called Western Civilization — there was in the West, more or less, a common set

of assumptions about the very important set of questions:

How should I live?

How should I be governed?

How should the state operate?

This set of assumptions about moral and political philosophy (one might call it the Judeo/Christian/Greco/Roman/ Middle Ages/Renaissance/ Enlightenment Thing) included the notions that, first of all, moral and political questions have an objective answer. Second, that all humans can know what that answer is, whether by revelation, by the natural sciences, or by some other method. And third, that these values all more or less form a coherent whole; they don't conflict. The idea was, in short, that there was an ideal pattern for living and operating a society, whoever you were and wherever you were.

Now, one could fall away from this pattern, and most people did, according to this set of ideas, through sin, through stupidity, through weakness, through being a prisoner of our economic class or whatever. But there was a basic belief that there was, generally, a right way to live — although peo-

ple might disagree, even kill, over what that right way was.

Heretics or rebels were thought to be dangerous, because they might turn people away from the truth. Western civilization for all those centuries was civilization in quotes in many ways — whether it was because Catholics and Protestants were massacring one another in the Thirty Years War due to the difference between consubstantiation and transubstantiation in the Eucharist (I still can never remember which one is Catholic and which one is Protestant), or because Robespierre's victims were rolling to the guillotine. There was a lot of horror in Western "civilization".

So this idea that there was general, moral, and political truth, that there was a coherent pattern of life which one should follow, was a very big tent, as one sometimes says in present political parlance.

The most important point about all this for our purposes this evening is that Marxism was essentially a misshapen and distorted branch of this tradition that culminated in the Enlightenment. It was a weird marriage of Hegel and a mechanis-

tic materialism, producing eventually totalitarianism and a bizarre and profitless (in many senses) economics. It bore the same relationship to much of the rest of Enlightenment thought, I suppose, that astrology bears to astronomy.

But nonetheless, at its heart there was a sense in which Marxism was rounded on reason, was internationalist, and had an idealistic side. It argued for a general way to live.

When asked the question how should one live, a Marxist would say that — whoever or wherever one was — one should help history move toward a classless society, and redistribute the abundance which came out of the natural workings of the dialectic in society. Engels went to his deathbed firmly believing that the first Communist society would be, of course, in the United States. Because this was the most advanced society, economic abundance would have been produced here first.

Marxists would at least argue. There was something to argue about. Reason had a role. And even after Lenin's 1917 coup d'etat against Kerensky, even after Stalin, something of this notion of general

applicability and rationality, some small part of this Enlightenment tradition, survived. This is the reason why, I think, Ackerman is right in saying that when we won the cold war, we won a civil war within the Enlightenment.

But now along about the same time that Marx was first writing, something else was happening in Europe. A completely different way of thinking about one's moral and political obligations as a human being was arising.

At first it was a relatively gentle and attractive philosophy. Its originators, such as Herder, were thinkers with whom even Sir Isaiah Berlin, himself a modern paragon of the Enlightenment, has expressed sympathy. He calls this new way of thinking about morals and politics the Counter-Enlightenment. It arose at first principally in Germany, out of reactions there against the French Enlightenment, and against French domination — political and military. Berlin calls it a great revolution in the human spirit.

The Counter-Enlightenment rejected the idea that moral and political questions have one answer, that

that answer can be known, and that true values don't conflict with one another. It contended right from the beginning that values are relative from civilization to civilization, from culture to culture, from tribe to tribe. They are not universal. Even at its somewhat benign beginning there was present in the Counter-Enlightenment the notion that it is one's own country's or one's own civilization's culture that matters, not those of — as it was once said — lesser breeds without the law.

There was no concept in the Counter-Enlightenment of single coherent truth. Answering the question, "how should I live?", political and moral decisions were principally thought to be acts of will, not matters of understanding. The proper analogy for moral and political decision-making was not the way one reasoned about theology or physics. It was, rather, biology, the survival of the fittest, or even artistic creativity.

A leader was neither a philosopher king nor an elected official; he was a romantic hero. Carlyle wrote about this concept a great deal, as did Nietzsche. The idea was that a leader molded people creatively,

as Beethoven molded notes. And most importantly, for our current purposes in understanding the implications of this Counter-Enlightenment line of thinking, the idea was present from the beginning that conflict between societies, between civilizations, between cultures, was inevitable. They would inevitably clash. The strongest would inevitably win. And war itself was an essential part of the picture.

There was an early, peaceful live-and-let-live version of this romantic, Counter-Enlightenment vision, identified with Herder and others. But before long, it took a more brutal turning. Through Nietzsche and others, it evolved toward notions of passionate nationalism and then into fascism, not only in Germany but in many other countries as well. It became, philosophically, and in many other ways, the Triumph of the Will.

Now although Communism — the central Communist state, the Soviet empire — was to some extent infected by this nationalist spirit, especially under Stalin during World War II (indeed Stalin created the Oriental despotism that Marx had warned against),

still, all along, there was in Marxism this small, slightly glowing coal of the Enlightenment idea of universal, general, coherent values. Enough of a coal, I think, to make Bruce Ackerman right.

Often the coal seemed to have gone out, but from time to time it would surprise you. And in pondering the old issue, "how should one live?" even some Communist leaders would ask themselves universal and general questions, and they would get surprising answers. The two most important times this happened, for our current purposes, were when these questions were asked by Khrushchev and Gorbachev. When Khrushchev made his 20th Party Congress speech attacking Stalin's crimes, it was the beginning of the end of the Soviet empire. His speech was the inspiration for generations of Russians and others who began to understand the fundamental contradictions, indeed the idiocy, of their own system. Of course we all owe a great deal to the dissidents, the renegades, the rebels, within the Soviet system. But it is also vitally important that Gorbachev, for all the difficulties he came to, nonetheless — in his effort to be, in

a sense, an honest Communist, to try to make the system live up to some sort of universalist ideas — he hesitated, and finally he made a firm decision not to send in the tanks. Gorbachev's sense of universal values, his capacity to be ashamed of his system's contradictions, made it possible for the Soviet system to deteriorate, and it deteriorated in part because of that small glowing coal of the Enlightenment at Marxism's core.

Put another way, because they were not children of the Counter-Enlightenment the Soviets never believed that war was inevitable. They wanted to win without war. And that's why, ultimately, we won. Since they didn't regard war as inevitable or desirable, unlike Fascists, our containment policy had time to work. And in fact it did work, almost exactly as George Kennan said it would in 1946. We held until they disintegrated. But it took nearly half a century instead of a few years.

Thirdly, we won because of nationalism itself. Moderate nationalism is the attractive side of the Counter-Enlightenment. And because the Soviet system was, in part, of course a Russian empire,

the dissident and separate parts of that empire, including in some cases the Russians themselves, saw that their own nation's cultures and spirits were being stifled by the Soviet system.

Well, what now?

The civil war within the Enlightenment is over. It's probably over for a long time. The way Frank Fukuyama says this is that it is the End of History, with a capital "H." What he principally means by that, I think, is that it is the end of civil wars within the tradition of the Enlightenment. But history with a small "h" is certainly not over; indeed, it is getting more and more exciting all the time. I want to conclude with some thoughts about that.

One of the reasons history is getting to be so exciting is technology. For example, the technology of inertial, even terminal, guidance of ballistic missiles, is now out and about in the world. Beyond single-stage SCUDs we will come to see longer-range two-stage ballistic missiles in the hands of more countries. The technology of chemical and bacteriological weapons is also out and about in the world.

And, proliferation of nuclear weapons is only being checked with great effort by the difficulty of acquiring fissionable material. In the aftermath of the breakdown of the Soviet Union, I'm afraid that even that difficulty may not prove to be a great one for a number of countries.

Second, the end of the cold war has freed nationalism. Some nationalisms now thrive in very virulent forms, particularly in the southern part of what used to be called the world island: from somewhere south of Moscow over through the Balkans, down into North Africa, east to south-central Asia and back up to the area south of Moscow. In this area there are a number of countries in which nationalism today is extremely strong — often augmented by strong cultural feelings or fundamental religious beliefs. There is also oil money, substantial oil money, in that part of the world. And there is not a strong tradition of democracy.

Certainly it is not only from that part of the world that international difficulties will come — sub-Saharan Africa, the Western Hemisphere, North Korea, and

elsewhere will present major problems too. But even if one concentrates only on this central area, I think one could say that, although we have slain the single dragon of Soviet imperialism, there are still lots of very large poisonous snakes. And, as they say in Hollywood, it's a jungle out there. Further, some of these snakes will soon be able to strike from a distance.

The world, although less dangerous with respect to a single cataclysmic exchange between the United States and the Soviet Union, has traded that danger for a number of very, very difficult international problems. Can we deal with those the way we won the cold war? By containment? By seeing Enlightenment notions of self-doubt come about in leaders of countries that have untoward ambitions? Will nationalism help us?

I think the answer to all of these questions is, unfortunately, no.

Containment will not help us. In dealing with the intellectual progeny of the Counter-Enlightenment, with virulent nationalism, it is crucial to understand their concept of

war being inevitable. This concept certainly seems to be out and about in Serbia and Iraq. It may soon be out and about in other parts of that area of the world.

In these countries can we count on the followers of current leaders, — e.g., Saddam's successors — someday to be seized by the same degree of Enlightenment spawned self-doubt that led Khrushchev to make the 20th Party Congress speech, that led Gorbachev to balk at sending in the tanks? I think the chances of that are very, very limited. Close to non-existent.

And nationalism is now far from helping us in the way that it helped us undermine the Soviet empire. Indeed, these new virulent nationalisms now feed on one another, together they metastasize. Serbian nationalism helps boost Croatian nationalism, and vice versa. These nationalisms are not like Polish nationalism in the 1980's. They are not our friends.

This world that we are beginning to see — with the addition of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, chemicals, bacteriologicals and the rest — begins to look more and more like a more lethal version of

the old world that existed before 1914, when a range of nationalist sentiments produced the holocaust of World War I.

I have to share with you one of my favorite anecdotes, from that time, about the power of nationalism. It is Frederic Morton's description of the actions of four individuals in August, 1914. All were outsiders, all intellectuals, all Viennese. I think its underlying point about nationalism's power is as true today in many parts of the world as it was in 1914 in Vienna.

As the guns of August started firing, the philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, a deviant from society in just about every way one can think of, a recluse recovering from an operation, enlisted in the Austro-Hungarian Army.

The composer Arnold Schoenberg, father of atonal music, at odds with the entire musical establishment of Vienna, had left Vienna in personal and artistic rebellion. But he returned in August of 1914, enlisted in the Deutschmeister Regiment and began composing conventional, certainly not atonal, patriotic military marches for its marching bands.

The painter Oskar Kokoschka, who talked about the personal misery of living in Vienna, sold his most cherished possession, a lovely painting of himself with his mistress (and practically everybody else's mistress at that time) Alma Mahler, bought himself a horse, a cavalry uniform, a brass helmet, and joined the 15th Imperial Dragoons.

And the psychiatrist Sigmund Freud, outcast from his city's medical establishment for his radical ideas, returned to Vienna, set up his practice again, refused to give male patients of conscription age certificates of nervous disability, and declared, and I quote, "all my libido goes to Austria-Hungary."

What we saw among these brilliant, unconventional, rebellious intellectuals — in many ways the forefathers of much of twentieth-century culture — in Vienna in August of 1914 is not far afield from what we may well see in other societies in other parts of the world as the spirit of nationalism grows. Such a world is extremely unpredictable. The risk of crossborder spillovers of nationalist conflict, indeed the risk of genocide, is substantial. And increasingly, as it mixes with

weapons of mass destruction and new delivery methods for them, nationalism creates a high degree, to put it mildly, of international uncertainty.

The U.S. and some other countries, acting together on an ad hoc basis, can, I suppose, from time to time check some of these expressions of nationalism when they evolve into genocide or dangerous cross-border threats. But this is a much messier, incoherent, and less intellectually manageable problem than the one we have just solved, as we did in the cold war — by organizing a worldwide crusade against a single warped product of the Enlightenment. In time, I'm fearful that for us and for other countries who might be willing to help, without some transformation of the way international order and decency are maintained, the countries that need to check this new nationalism will tire. At some point the burden will become too great.

A new approach toward collective security seems to me to be badly needed, and I will close by saying that I think that, at this time, the only institution that is likely to be able to provide the mechanism for

that is the old and somewhat creaky United Nations. The mechanisms that were produced in 1945 and 1946 for enforcing peace via the United Nations are still there. Such efforts will have to be undertaken in a very different manner than people thought in 1945 and 1946, and the difficulties of how to structure relations between national military forces and the UN Security Council still need to be worked out. But, as far as I know, in one particular case they're being worked out even this evening, with respect to Somalia.

One thing seems clear to me. If we look at the ideas that underlie the cold war and at those that underlie the new international disorder, spawned by children of the Counter-Enlightenment, that is coming into existence, it suggests to me that we have a huge challenge ahead of us. And it is a challenge different in nature, different in strategy, different in technology, and, above all, different in ideas than what we have dealt with before. We may well find — and I am sorry to close on a somber note — that the last 45 years have been easy.

1992 Annual Dinner

Principal Corporate Benefactor

Northrop Corporation

Corporate Patrons

BDM International Inc.

General Dynamics Corporation

Martin Marietta Corporation

Riggs National Bank

Rockwell International Corporation

Sponsors

American International Group

Arnold & Porter

Center for Naval Analyses

Coopers & Lybrand

Exxon Corporation

Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc.

Mr. & Mrs. Patrick W. Gross

Mr. & Mrs. Jan W. Mares

Donors

Hon. & Mrs. W. Tapley Bennett

Mr. J. Lynn & Amb. Diana Lady Dougan

Hon. & Mrs. Richard Helms

Hon. & Mrs. Tidal W. McCoy

Hon. Paul H. Nitze

Hon. & Mrs. Helmut Sonnenfeldt

TRW, Inc.

Board of Directors

Patrick W. Gross ~ Chairman

Hon. Franklin D. Kramer ~ President

Thomas J. Reckford ~ Treasurer

Lois Haase Mares ~ Secretary

Hon. W. Tapley Bennett

Neil Carothers, III

Hon. Horace G. Dawson, Jr.

Hon. Diana Lady Dougan

Franklin J. Havlicek

L. Oakley Johnson

Richard L. LePere

Hon. Leonard H. Marks

Hon. William F. McSweeney, Jr.

Philip Merrill

Jean C. Newsom

Rosemary Neahe Niehuss

Philip A. Odeen

Peter W. Rodman

Hon. Helmut Sonnenfeldt

Hon. Togo D. West, Jr.

Wesley S. Williams, Jr.

The World Affairs Council of Washington, D.C.

The World Affairs Council of Washington, D.C., was formed in 1980 to serve as a community-based institution offering every area resident the opportunity to become more informed about international policy issues. It is a non-profit, non-position-taking, non-partisan organization that seeks to broaden public interest in and understanding of foreign policy, defense and economic issues. The Council is an affiliate of the Foreign Policy Association in New York, and is part of the national network of councils that exist in Philadelphia, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and more than eighty communities throughout the United States.

The World Affairs Council organizes monthly programs that feature prominent figures in international affairs. U.S. and foreign government leaders, members of the media, business executives and scholars are invited to address the Council's membership and the general public on a wide variety of international issues. In addition to monthly public lectures, the Council offers a special series of programs for its young professional members under the auspices of the International Issues Forum. A series of off-the-record luncheon meetings on international economic issues is offered to Corporate and Sustaining Members. The Council serves as the Metropolitan Coordinator of the Great Decisions Program, sponsored nationally by the Foreign Policy Association. In this capacity it helps organize small discussion groups that meet to exchange information and opinions on U.S. foreign policy. The Council also provides special workshops for local high school teachers and students and offers an intensive summer institute for educators.

The Council is supported by over 1,500 individuals in the Washington area that have professions in government, academia, the diplomatic corps, and private business. It also receives support from local foundations and corporations and national firms that have Washington offices.

The World Affairs Council of Washington, D.C.
1726 M Street, N.W. Suite 800 Washington, D.C. 20036 202-293-1051